

# SUPPLEMENT

## TO THE

# NONCONFORMIST.

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LONDON: WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 1871.

[GRATIS.]

### THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

#### PAYMENT OF FEES OUT OF THE RATES FOR THE SUPPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS.

In our last number we gave a general outline of the discussion that took place at the session of the Congregational Union on the 12th on this subject, when the following resolution was, after a long debate, carried by a very large majority:—

That this Union, while earnestly maintaining that religious instruction and training are absolutely essential to a complete education, believes that funds raised by rates and taxes ought not to be applied to the maintenance of schools where sectarian teaching is given, and emphatically protests against the power conferred on school boards by Clause 25 of the Elementary Education Act to pay fees to denominational day-schools, regarding such payment as a species of concurrent endowment, and a violation of the principle of religious equality.

The subject is of such extreme importance, that, at the risk of some repetition, we copy from the extended report of the *English Independent* two of the principal speeches condemning the payment by school boards out of the rates of the fees of indigent children in denominational schools:—

The Rev. J. A. PICTON, M.A. (a member of the London School Board), in moving the above resolution said:—Much fault has been found with the Elementary Education Act, and some on very good grounds; but I cannot help thinking that, on the whole, it points in a very excellent direction. It does tend more or less to free education from ecclesiastical influences. In England we never proceed by a leap, but take only one step at a time; and perhaps this Elementary Education Act, with the exception of the 25th clause, goes almost as far as we could have expected. Let me call your attention to one or two points of this Act. The 7th sect. reserves to denominational schools the right of receiving grants from the Imperial Government, but it imposes upon denominational schools further restrictions; it insists upon a strict time-table conscience clause. The 14th sect. of the Act distinguishes board-schools from all others by adding the condition that no religious catechism or formulary distinctive of any religious denomination shall be taught in these schools. Now, why is this special feature added in the case of board-schools? I suppose it is because there is a special difficulty in the application of rates which are taken under our own eyes, the application of which is understood locally to be the purposes of denominational schools. We all take more interest in what is going on immediately under our noses than we do in what is generally diffused throughout the land; and I am persuaded it was felt by the Imperial Government that there would be a very special difficulty in applying directly under our eyes money taken in the small area of a school district to the purposes of sectarian instruction. But, of course, there is another reason, which is simply this, that what we may call grant schools are supposed to depend, and have hitherto depended partly on the voluntary principle, while board-schools depend wholly, and without any exception, on money belonging to the public. According to Sect. 97 of the Act, in regard to grants for the sustenance of schools from the Imperial revenue, it is distinctly stated that not no such grant is made with respect to any religious instruction, so that the Government quite absolves itself from responsibility in this matter. And also in the minute of education—I refer, of course, to the new one, which does not much differ from the older minute in that respect—a provision is laid down that the grant is not to exceed the amount raised by school fees and subscriptions together, so that, in appearance, at any rate, as far as these grant-schools are concerned, the Government refuses any application of their money to any denominational purpose. But in board-schools, of course, every penny, whether it comes from the imperial taxation or poor-rates, is raised out of public funds, and hence it has been found necessary to make a difference between them. In Sect. 17 of the Act power is given to the boards to remit the fees of any children whose destitution is proved for periods of six months; and in Clause 26 we are empowered to establish free schools at which no fees shall be charged at all. Now all this is consistent, and points, I maintain, in one direction, towards the gradual emancipation of the education of the country from the fetters which sectarian divisions have imposed upon it. (Hear, hear.) But now

comes the snake in the grass. In the 25th sect. of the Act we are told that the school board may, if they think fit—it is not compulsory, that should be distinctly remembered—"may from time to time, for a renewable period, not exceeding six months, pay the whole or any part of the school fees payable at any public elementary school by any child resident in their district whose parent is, in their opinion, unable from poverty to pay to same; but no payment shall be made or refused on condition of the child attending any public elementary school other than such as may be selected by the parent; and such payment shall not be deemed to be parochial relief given to such parent." Now when I look at that clause I cannot think what the Liberal members of Parliament were about when they allowed it to pass. (Hear, hear.) I had the great pleasure of being present in the House of Commons the other evening when the principles which we maintain obtained, as I think, a most signal triumph—(applause)—and as it was the first occasion of my visiting that august assembly I was, of course, very curious to observe the manners and customs of honourable members; and I noted that a large proportion of them were leaning back with their hats over their eyes, apparently in a state of profound somnolency. Whether this was real or affected I cannot say; but I cannot help thinking that some of our Liberal members must have been in that condition when this clause was allowed to pass. (Laughter.) Now notice, if this clause is put into operation at all, it of course involves the sustenance of sectarian views of religion directly out of the public funds. It is, as the resolution says, a species of concurrent endowment, and I should like to add, on my own part, a species of concurrent endowment in a peculiarly offensive form. It is concurrent endowment not merely because payment is made for special religious teaching in schools, but because payment is made for sustaining the influence of the churches with which the schools are connected. Whenever a branch of any institution is subsidised I maintain that the mother institution is endowed. The schools are organically connected with the churches. We know that it has been the custom of very great churches in this land to make the school one of the principal instruments for extending its influence amongst the poor, and that not merely by means of teaching, but by means of special advantages given through charities and otherwise which connect the people more or less with the churches. When I look at the probable amount of money that would be given on any large area to the churches in this way, I think it is no slight matter. An excellent clergyman on the London School Board, when this subject was discussed, announced that he should require payment for some twenty-five children at his school. Now, suppose the average to be about twenty, and I imagine that is beneath the mark, if you consider the vast number of denominational schools existing in the metropolitan area, taking the payment to be only 3d. a week, you would find that the sum would speedily amount to 25,000l. or 30,000l.; and it is no slight matter that money to this extent should be given out of the public funds to maintain ecclesiastical influences. But, besides, I contend that this is concurrent endowment in a peculiarly offensive form, because it does much collateral mischief to the ideal of education. What has hindered education? I believe, in a great degree, the jealousies of the churches. Whenever any man (or body of men) is forced, through the pressure of circumstances, to undertake a duty for which he has not been educated, or for which he is not fitted by his constitution, or by his general objects in life, it will always be done imperfectly. I do not believe that the Christian Church was originated to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. I contend, therefore, that whenever churches undertake this kind of teaching, they almost always have an ulterior object in view, and that is the spread of their own sectarian views. (Applause, and "No, no.") I contend that the effect has been to keep down the education of the people at a lower level than it would otherwise have obtained. Go through this metropolitan area, examine the schools, and ask which are the best in a secular point of view. You will find that it is generally those that are least connected with any special divisions of the Church. There are a number of schools called Birkbeck schools, which profess to be entirely free from all religious instruction, at any rate, from all doctrinal considerations; and I contend, from personal knowledge, that these schools are some of the best that exist in the country. The same may be said of British

schools; although they give religious instruction, they profess to be entirely above all sectarian considerations, and from my knowledge of them, I contend that they are amongst the best elementary schools in the land. (Hear, hear.) So that if, when we have a great opportunity of freeing education from the bondage of sectarianism, we take a retrograde step, and give to churches a pecuniary interest in maintaining the present state of things, we shall be setting up a great obstacle to the progress of education. But besides, it is concurrent endowment in a peculiarly offensive form, because, as a matter of fact, we know well enough that it will be substantially confined to one or two great sections of the Church. (Hear, hear.) Which are denominational schools? Not British schools. Scarcely Wesleyan schools, although they are more so at times than others. It is simply the Episcopalian and the Roman Catholic schools which in any proper meaning of the term are denominational schools; and we are giving money, if we pay to denominational schools, simply to sustain the influence of the Church of England and of the Roman Catholics. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Forster, in a letter which he wrote the other day to the School Board in Liverpool, brings in an argument that we have often heard on our School Board, and that I suppose has often been heard elsewhere, from the conscientious convictions of the poor whose children have to be sent to school. "It is possible that the parent, from motives of convenience or conscientious convictions, may prefer a public elementary school not provided by the board, and it would not be just to deprive him of the right of choice because he is compelled to send his child to school, and is known to be unable by poverty to pay that school fee." I regard that argument as most fallacious. The ratepayer has a conscience as well as the parent; and if the ratepayer is conscientiously opposed to doctrines which the parent wants his child to be taught, believes that they sap the foundation of the Christian religion, and are inimical to Christian society, what right has Government to compel him to pay that this child may be taught. (Applause.) But for many years past we have heard constant lamentations as to the apparent want of interest on the part of the working classes in any church whatever, and only now, when it is a question of supporting denominational schools out of the rates, are we told of the numbers of poor people who would be utterly affrighted at sending their children to a school, not where religion is not taught, but where their special sectarian opinions are not taught. We all know what this means; it points directly to the opinions of the Roman Catholics, whom we have every wish to respect, but who have no right to force upon us the support of their religious views. We know from experience that the Roman Catholics insist upon it that you have no right to compel them to send their children to school, unless they can, at the school, have their priest to teach them, and the whole body of their peculiar dogmas instilled into their minds. Well, admit that in this country, on a comparatively small scale, and what will you do in Ireland? You will be compelled in consistency (although Mr. Disraeli says this country is not governed by logic, but by rhetoric) to hand over the teaching of the country into the hands of the priests—a proceeding from which every civilised country in the world revolts—(applause)—a sort of thing from which even comparatively benighted Austria has for some years revolted, and from which what was at one time the dumb-founded Spaniard (a phrase scarcely applicable now) has shrunk with horror and indignation. (Applause.) I should have liked to make this resolution a great deal stronger; but as that is not permitted, let me add, on my own part, that not only do I protest against the power being conferred in the bill, but I protest against any school board exercising the power; and I would earnestly entreat any members of school boards who may be here to consider what they will do if they once put this clause into operation. It is easy to give money, it is not so easy to get it back again. It is easy to establish a practice of this kind, but it is not so easy to abolish it; and if once the denominational schools get into the habit of depending upon any considerable amount of fees paid for destitute children, a cry of "vested interests" will be raised at once, and we shall have another little Establishment to overturn. I earnestly hope that this resolution will strengthen the hands of our friends in all parts of the country to maintain their protest in favour of religious equality. (Applause.)



The Rev. R. W. DALE, M.A., of Birmingham, in supporting the resolution, said: The object with which we submit this resolution to the Union is a very distinct and definite one; it is to get the 25th Clause of the Elementary Education Act repealed. (Applause.) And, further, we can scarcely be charged with attempting to obstruct the progress of popular education. Mr. Forster himself has again and again admitted that he would never have been able to pass the bill through Parliament had it not been for the earnest endeavours on the part of those of us now agitating for the abolition of this clause to arouse popular attention to the necessity of legislation. It was through the action of a certain powerful organisation, which I will not venture to mention in this place, that a popular feeling was created on this question from Berwick-on-Tweed to Land's End, and on the tide of that popular feeling Mr. Forster was able to carry his measure to a successful issue. We at any rate have not been guilty of offering any obstruction to the development of a national system of education; and if we oppose this particular clause it is because we believe that its action will tend to repress the development of such a system of popular education as would secure the largest and happiest results. (Hear, hear.) Now, let me call the attention of the assembly to this fact, that although this clause does permit school boards to pay school fees for the indigent children attending denominational schools, it does not impose upon them the obligation to do so. In providing for indigent children the Act offers the school boards three alternatives; they can build free schools, or remit fees in schools erected by themselves in which fees are ordinarily charged, or they can pay fees to denominational schools when the parent declares it to be his wish that his child should attend such schools. But we find that the school boards that have entered upon the discussion of the question at all have determined not to build free schools, though permitted to do so. At present they have not touched upon the question of remitting fees in their own schools (of course they have not their own schools at present), but they have almost unanimously determined to avail themselves of the power given by the 25th Clause to pay the fees in denominational schools. I maintain that it is just as much the duty of a school board in a great town like Leeds, or Manchester, or Liverpool, or Birmingham to build a free school, as it is to pay fees in denominational schools. If a school board declares that it is bound to put into operation all the permissive clauses of the Act, then it is just as much its duty to erect a free school as it is to pay fees to the Church of England and Roman Catholic schools. But the Act was intended to give the school boards freedom of choice, and to leave it these alternatives. It has so happened, in consequence of the cumulative vote invented by philosophical radicals, and welcomed with enthusiasm by the Tory opposition, that what we believe to be the popular feeling in a great many towns has not found expression in its full force—(Hear, hear)—and the strong sectarian element on boards—an element which the cumulative vote must from the nature of the case specially develop—is tending to restore what in my conscience I believe to be only a new form of the old Church-rate. Surely the abolition of the old Church-rates does not lay so far in the past that there are no survivors now to tell us what was the nature of the objection on which Nonconformists protested against paying a rate for the maintenance of the fabric of the Church. It was only to be expected that very early in this debate there would appear that unhappy Irish child clothed in rags and picked out of the gutter that constitutes the classic argument on behalf of those who wish fees to be paid. (Laughter.) I remember when we were discussing the question of compulsion a few years ago in various parts of the country there was always a typical widow turned up; she was unfortunate enough to have half-a-dozen children under the age of twelve, some of whom, by selling matches and other useful industrial occupations were contributing to the support of the family; and we were asked whether we intended to be so cruel as to compel these children to go to school when their labour was necessary for the support of their unhappy parent. Now, the typical widow has had a decent burial—(laughter)—and those who a few months ago were most zealous against the proposal to introduce a compulsory law are now most anxious for its introduction, since they have discovered that under the happy arrangements of the Elementary Education Act, and under the happy results of the cumulative vote, they can use the compulsory law in order to fill denominational schools. (Hear, hear.) The typical widow has disappeared, and her successor is Michael Donovan, who case demands the deep and earnest sympathy of my friend Mr. Eustace Conder. (Renewed laughter.) I have only to say that the whole argument of Mr. Conder resting on the case of Michael Donovan is utterly inconsistent with the hypothesis upon which the Elementary Act is built. That hypothesis is that in public elementary schools the conscience clause includes within definite limits all religious instruction to which any parent has a right to object; that during the hours of secular instruction there is nothing given in any public elementary school to which a parent of any religious faith whatever can entertain any conscientious objection:

hence in those rural districts which are occupied only by Episcopalian schools, if a school board is established, no Nonconformist will be listened to, should he declare before a magistrate that he objects to send his child to an Episcopalian school to receive instruction during the hours appropriated to secular teaching. The reply will be, "Your rights are completely protected by the conscience clause; and notwithstanding your objection to what you may regard as the general religious tone likely to run through the school, you must send your child to the school, or you must pay the fine which the by-law imposes." Now, if that is to be the theory of the Act, let us have the theory worked out fairly to its ultimate issue, and let us try whether we can secure that during the hours for secular instruction there shall be nothing in any public elementary school to which any parent can possibly object. But, sir, if we are to be told that Michael Donovan's parents object to sending their child, not to an Episcopalian school, not to a Wesleyan or a British school, but to a rate-provided school, that is to have no special sectarian colour at all, and that they are to be protected in that protest, why you undermine and sweep away the whole of that compromise on which the Act is built, and you postpone to an indefinite period the development of a truly national system of education. (Applause.) Then I cannot help admiring the discovery which has been made during the last few months of an extraordinary zeal that lies latent in the heart of the working classes of this country to secure for their children specific forms of sectarian instruction. (Laughter.) What will be the actual form in which this 25th clause will work wherever it is adopted by a school board? Will the parents be so particularly anxious that the child should go to a Church of England or a Roman Catholic school? Well, in some cases no doubt there may be some anxiety on the part of a parent, especially if clerical or priestly influence is brought to bear upon him. Our experience in Birmingham is that any school that charges a penny while its neighbours charge twopence will at once be filled. There was a Roman Catholic school that dropped from twopence to a penny, and it was crowded with Protestant children directly; and when the fee went up again to twopence, it was not the conscientious convictions of the Protestant parents that led them to withdraw their children—it was the rise in the tariff of charges. (Laughter.) You will find that your districts will be swept by curates and Scripture-readers and Bible-women who will tell the parents that the proper thing is to send their children to the denominational school that is just at hand; and if the parents incline to send them to the rate school, which has no such missionaries on its behalf sweeping the town, the strong personal influence brought to bear by the agents of the Established Church upon the great mass of the indifferent population in our great towns will lead to the development of an enormous and unprecedented zeal for religious instruction among the people. I shall know what interpretation to put upon that. I know the working classes of the town in which I live a great deal too well for any such facts to persuade me that they are anxious that their children should be sent to the denominational schools, but the influence of Bible-women upon them will at once secure the filling of the denominational schools. Then, remember this, that under this clause it will be perfectly possible for any church that chooses to do it to sustain in any district it may select a great free school, which shall constitute a strong agency for propagating its own religious creed, and it will be able to maintain this free school without deriving a single sixpence a year from the voluntary contributions of its own adherents. Now I can quite understand the strong objections which have been felt to the denominational system as a whole, but that system has rested upon this hypothesis, that a considerable proportion of the expense of maintaining the school should be derived from the contributions of those who sympathise with the denominational character which the school assumes. But, under Clause 25, if the fees hitherto paid by parents are paid out of rates, and if you add to that grant from the rates the increased grant, under the New Code from the Privy Council, every farthing necessary for the maintenance of a school may be derived on the one hand from the rates, and on the other hand from the Privy Council, and I say that we are called upon to protest against rendering it possible for a great system of propagandism to be sustained not by the aid of the State as in denominational schools, but actually by funds absolutely and altogether derived from the rates or from the consolidated fund. Before I sit down let me call the attention of the Union to this fact, that we have a ground on which to go to Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone in this matter. I was in the House of Commons when Mr. Gladstone introduced, or announced rather and explained, the changes introduced into the Education Act last session in consequence of the antagonism which the original form of the Act provoked, and you will remember that in the original Act it was in the power of school boards to grant definite subsidies to denominational schools. Mr. Gladstone saw that that was likely to create great division and excitement in the school districts in the country; therefore the power of granting a subsidy was withdrawn, and the increased grant from the Privy Council was given to the schools in compensation for the withdrawal of that possible subsidy. Mr. Gladstone said they were most anxious to draw a distinct and definite line between the school boards and all the denominational schools, and I think we may ask, after the experience we

have had in the great towns in the north with regard to this question, that this Clause 25 should be repealed, in order that Mr. Gladstone's intention may be carried out. (Applause.)

#### DEPUTATION TO MR. GLADSTONE.

A deputation from Nonconformist committees in Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool, joined by others from various parts of the country, waited upon the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone on Wednesday afternoon to represent the dissatisfaction widely felt among Nonconformists concerning the payment of fees to denominational schools by school boards, and the general position of Nonconformists in relation to the Government and the Liberal party. The deputation was introduced by George Dixon, Esq., M.P., of Birmingham, and consisted of Messrs. R. Johnson, Jos. Thompson, Beith, Rigby, Chas. Thompson, and the Revs. J. A. Macfayden, and A. Thomson, of Manchester; S. Pearson, Liverpool; W. M. Statham, Hull; R. W. Dale, H. W. Crosskey, J. T. Brown, and W. Middlemore, Birmingham; H. J. Robjohns, Newcastle; H. Griffiths, Bowden, W. H. Davison, and Alderman Smalley, Bolton; H. Mason, Ashton; S. Reaney, Warrington; and R. Sinclair, London.

It was arranged that the right hon. gentleman should be addressed by the Rev. R. W. Dale in relation to the payment of fees to denominational schools and the working of the Education Act; by the Rev. H. W. Crosskey on the injustice done by the payment of fees to industrial schools from the management of which, by the rules, Nonconformists are expressly excluded; and by the Rev. Alex. Thomson, M.A., on the general relations of Nonconformists to the Government; on the Endowed Schools Act, and especially the new schemes from Harrow and Winchester, which exclude Nonconformists from the governing bodies; and on the University Tests Bill. The action of the cumulative vote was also referred to. The right hon. gentleman received the representations made with his accustomed courtesy, and requested the deputation to put its views on the educational question in writing. He stated distinctly that the Government would not consent to the alterations which had been made in the University Tests Bill in the Upper House. The answers on the other points raised in the course of a lengthened conversation were generally considered by the deputation to be satisfactory.

#### THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD.

At the weekly meeting of the Board on Wednesday there was a long discussion on the recommendation of the Statistical Committee that inspectors should be sent to every house in the metropolis for the purpose of ascertaining particulars as to children who did not properly attend school. Canon CROMWELL, who opposed the recommendation, moved that the inquiries in question should not be extended beyond the districts from which children were likely to attend elementary schools, maintaining that such an inquiry as was proposed by the Statistical Committee would be vexatious to people of the upper classes and a waste of money. In the course of the debate, the Rev. Dr. BARRY recommended that the views of the committee should be carried out; Mr. FREEMAN complained that there was not an equality of treatment in the mode in which the committee contemplated carrying out the inquiry, and thought that before incurring the expenses of the inquiry it would be well to get the sanction of the Education Department; Mr. SMITHIES believed that the best course to adopt would be to support the recommendation of the committee, and considered that such an inquiry was much more needed in the West-end than in the East-end—(laughter); the Rev. Mr. PICTON thought that the inquiry should be thoroughly comprehensive; the Rev. Mr. MEE was convinced that it was ridiculous for the Board to attempt such an inquiry in the case of the children of the higher-class families in the West-end, besides being unnecessary; Mr. REED, M.P., approved of a general inquiry, and believed that the return would be not very expensive, and would be very valuable; Mr. GREEN could not see what objection there could be to giving the information which the committee desired, and declared that any persons who objected to give such information would not deserve well of their country; Mr. LUCRAFT went in for a full inquiry; the Rev. J. RODGERS did not think the inquiry would be attended with any great expense, and hoped that it would be carried out; Mr. WATSON was ready to acquiesce with the decision of the board. The board divided—

For the motion ...	15
Against ...	21
Majority against ...	6

The motion was therefore lost, and the inquiry will be carried out as proposed.

The London School Board accepted the recommendation of one of the Industrial Schools Committee to send children to the certified industrial schools now in operation, at from 2s. to 4s. per week, with a premium in each case of 3s. There are vacancies at the disposal of the board to the extent of 366 for boys and 306 for girls. They also agreed to appoint three officers, at salaries of 30s. per week each, to look up suitable cases.



## Anniversary Meetings.

## COLONIAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The Rev. T. Binney presided on Thursday, May 11, at a numerously-attended meeting held at the Weigh House Chapel, on the anniversary of the formation of the society. Upon the platform with the Chairman were the Rev. J. C. Harrison, Rev. H. Allon, the Rev. H. Hannay, Rev. W. Braden, Rev. Morlais Jones; Rev. W. R. Lewis, of Sandhurst, Victoria; Rev. W. Fell, of Wellington, New Zealand; Rev. W. Tyler, an American missionary to the Zulu Caffres; and F. Allport, Esq. Prayer was offered by the Rev. J. C. Harrison.

The CHAIRMAN, who was received with loud cheers, said the committee had been pleased again to ask him to take the chair at their annual meeting, and he had much pleasure in complying with their request, although he was of opinion that it might have been better for the committee to have selected some member of Parliament to fill the post. When this society was formed hardly anything had been done for the colonies. Up to that time almost everything that had been done in the Australian colonies had been done by one man, Mr. Hopkins, of Hobart Town, who had been removed by death since their last anniversary meeting. More than forty years ago Mr. Hopkins went from this country and settled in Van Diemen's Land, as it was then called. By his own munificence he sent to England and took out the first Congregational minister who was settled in Hobart Town. Victoria was not then a colony; it was a mere bush, and Mr. Hopkins had a good deal to do with settling that colony. He rendered valuable aid to other colonies as well as to Victoria, contributing to every good work. He did not confine himself to his adopted country, but frequently sent very large donations to England. He lived to be eighty-four years of age, and was a Sunday-school teacher his whole life. On his eightieth birthday he invited all the children of the Sunday-schools of all denominations to come to tea. The governor, dignified clergy, ministers of the various denominations gathered together on the occasion to pay respect to him. Mr. Hopkins began life on the principle of consecrating a portion of his gains to God. That portion was always one-tenth, and sometimes, he believed, a great deal more. God blessed him, and he was enabled to do a great deal of good. They would hear to-night that the society required subscriptions on account of Bush missions in Queensland; but they were not neglecting those in New South Wales, where the Colonial Society was not engaged in this work. His friend, Mr. Fairfax, speaking of a minister settled down in an outlying station, remarked—"He is surrounded by about six hundred free selectors, having one hundred acres each." "But," he proceeds, "we have three other Bush missionaries fairly and fully at work. As treasurer, I estimate our expenses this year at 800*l*. Our quarterly envelopes the other Sunday at Pitt-street produced 134*l*. of which 73*l*. were for the Bush missions." Mr. Binney concluded by exhorting the churches at home to increased liberality towards this agency. (Applause.)

The Rev. A. HANNAY, Secretary, read an abstract of the report, which, after some explanation of the precise objects of the society, stated that the reply which was not seldom made to the committee's appeal for contributions was that "the colonies should now care for themselves," as though the same conditions of life were to be found in all parts of our colonial possessions and all the colonies had reached the same stage of development. Such was notoriously not the case, and it was the constant concern of the committee so to administer the funds at their disposal as that, on the one hand, there should be no colonial settlement, however separated and desolate, where the voice of the Christian minister should not at times at least be heard; and that, on the other hand, there should be no church or missionary society enfeebled by undue bounty. The work of the society divided itself into two parts—church aid and missionary effort. The successful missionary having planted a church in the midst of a small and scattered population, and with only a few men on whom he can rely for co-operation and temporal support, the society, in its department of church aid, supplements the contribution of the church towards their minister's stipend. The number of churches aided in this way is about seventy; the amount expended last year was about 1,400*l*. This money is so administered as to call forth the resources of the colonists in aiding each other, the stronger churches in aiding the weak. The committee expended in Canada last year, over and above the sum spent in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, the sum of 500*l*. through the committee of the Canada Congregational Missionary Society, in supplement of 1,000*l*. voted by that society, whose rule was, as the condition of a grant, to exact that a certain sum, determined according to the estimate of the church's pecuniary resources, should be paid by each beneficiary church towards its minister's stipend. The churches aided are, for the most part, centres of true Christian fellowship and evangelistic influence and effort. Even where there are other evangelical churches, which shine as lights, the Gospel is preached in the aided churches with the true Congregational "ring," neither Arminian nor Hyper-Calvinistic, either of which would be less favourable to freedom of mind and action in religion. With regard to work done and fruits gathered there is

nothing in any of the reports which come to hand which indicates either exceptionally marked success or the reverse. All write like men whose great concern is to render good service to Christ; and if the service be measured not by its apparent bulk, but by the spirit which animates it,—the loyalty to Christ, the love to men, the self-denial,—it claims the heartiest recognition of those who occupy more conspicuous positions on the field, and are popularly acknowledged to be "workmen who need not to be ashamed." The missionary operations have been continued. Mr. C. R. Butland, of New College, has been appointed as missionary to the Thames Gold Fields, which have become the centre of a permanent industry and a thriving, growing population. It had been the boast of the committee for some years that the churches of Victoria, as of most of the other Australian colonies, had outgrown the stage of dependence, and could now provide for its own work. It appeared, however, from repeated reports that the Congregational Union of Victoria was only able to carry on its missionary operations without external aid by an undue limitation of these operations, while many fields were left altogether unoccupied. The committee had determined to make a grant to this Union on the principle of a percentage on the income for missionary purposes of the Union aided, after that income had reached a certain amount. The grant of 20 per cent. on the income gave such a stimulus to colonial effort as to result in the income being doubled, and several new stations being occupied. There are three missionaries labouring in the Bush and at Queensland, and from all these, cheering reports are being received. The mission originated by the society was the first regularly organised mission, it is believed, in which ordained ministers were employed in the Bush. It has been a very costly undertaking. Almost the entire outlay has so far been provided for by the society. Contributions are now being received, however, from the settlers in the bush themselves, and there is a prospect that even the bush mission may, in a few years, become self-supporting. (Cheers.)

The cash statement of the society showed that during the year the income had been 4,068*l*., including a balance of 700*l*. in hand at the close of last year. The balance in hand, after calculating the liabilities of the society, is 332*l*.; besides which the society has 1,000*l*. invested in East India Stock.

Rev. H. ALLON moved the adoption of the report, and the appointment of the committee for the ensuing year. In the course of his speech, he said:—

In the United States, having travelled on one occasion all night in a railway car, he obtained at six o'clock in the morning a daily newspaper which contained news from London up to four o'clock on the preceding afternoon. It was gratifying to find, too, that the civilisation which was thus spreading was Christian in its character, and that it is the evangelical element in it which is thus dominating the world. In America even Romanism was assimilating the evangelical element and maintaining its position only in virtue of the evangelical element it acquires. Whatever is distinctive of Rome is losing ground. If it is our mission to colonise so large a portion of the world, it is our responsibility to send to those countries the very best elements of our national life. There is this peculiarity in our colonisation—it is automatic. Men go to various parts of the world impelled by a law of natural affinity or interest; the State does not fix their destination, and all that we can do is to endeavour to make them good Christians before they start, or to follow them with that object when they reach their new homes. It was of the utmost importance that they should strive to intermix with the first elements of national life a true religious sentiment, as was done by the Puritans in America, the result of which is visible to the present day. The diffusion of religious sentiment was an element of national safety. He believed that in the United States the religious element which our forefathers infused is so deep and strong, so widely diffused and so tenderly cherished, that it would be very difficult indeed for an unscrupulous statesman to procure a war between the two countries. Peace between the United States and England was maintained mainly in virtue of the strong religious conscience and sentiment of the Puritan churches. (Cheers.) Australia was colonised not in a very enviable way; we sent with our convicts certain organic institutions, and the colonists have had to purge out both the social and the constitutional evils. The conclusion arrived at was that if we can effectually provide religiously in the beginning for a people, we do all that is necessary for their national religious life. In some districts of America a man feels crowded if he has a couple of farms within twenty miles of him, and he straightway goes a hundred miles off; the religious feeling of aggressiveness is so strong that wherever he met with a settlement, he found there a school and a church. With an income of 4,000*l*. a year, the Colonial Society was doing its work well among the settlers in English colonies. Colonisation is so rapid that it is imperative that English men and women at home should do something for English settlers, otherwise it appears to be impossible that in many districts a church or school should be built. He went through Canada recently, and visited most of the principal churches there. In some parts of Canada they are very badly provided. Many of the churches are small, scarcely large enough to be easily self-supporting. The Congregationalism in Canada is hardly more than thirty years old. The Congregationalists in Canada have fallen short of their Presbyterian and Wesleyan brethren. While Congregationalists have small meeting houses, which was likely to be the condition of affairs for some time to come, the Presbyterians and Wesleyans have grown to greatness. It might be desirable, in some instances, to apply a little gracious violence so as to force the churches to develop their resources. There is this great comfort in the operations of this society, it is ever completing its work. If they would henceforth realise the idea of the importance of diffusing the religious element in the colonies,

England would become, in a very great degree, the mother of churches, and the mother of nations. (Cheers.)

The Rev. W. R. LEWIS, as a representative of the Congregational Union of Victoria, gave some details of the work of evangelisation carried on in that colony. Some fifty ministers are engaged in connection with Victoria, not only on the Sabbath-day, but on many days of the week. They have to work too most zealously in connection with education. They have much to contend with on account of Roman Catholic and Episcopal influence; nevertheless the Congregational schools are increasing, not only in number, but also in efficiency, and those who take that education for their children, are to a large extent members of our churches. The amount which had been voted by the Union in this country had had the effect of stimulating colonial liberality. The grant from the Union had been required for the purpose of bush missions, in which the churches of Victoria had been actively engaged for some time. The agents of the Colonial Missionary Society were just the kind of men to go from place to place and station to station. They wanted some such men at Victoria. If they could only get the men he believed that they could soon get the money.

The Rev. MORLAIS JONES, in seconding the resolution, said that if they strove now to do their duty by these colonies, they might rest satisfied that the colonists would not be found wanting in any future hour of trial for the mother country. (Cheers.)

The Rev. W. FELL, of Wellington, New Zealand, after seven years' mission labour there, expressed his belief that New Zealand afforded a very inviting sphere of Christian labour and ministerial work. The number of Congregational churches in that colony is not great, but they are actuated by an enlightened and liberal spirit, and there was every reason to believe that they would increase in numbers and power as New Zealand increases in wealth and intelligence. There are still settlements in which there are no churches to represent Congregationalism.

The Rev. W. BRADEN moved the second resolution, expressive of confidence in the society for its services to the colonists in aiding weak churches to maintain the ordinances of religion, and by sending missionaries to preach the Gospel in districts which had no settled ministry.

The Rev. Mr. TYLER, a missionary who has been labouring since 1849 among the Zulu Caffres, in connection with the American Board of Missions, testified to the fidelity with which the agents of the Colonial Missionary Society pursue their labours. The Caffres were a degraded race, but the Gospel had won triumphs among them. Mr. Tyler handed to the chairman a photograph of a native who had been recently ordained as a Christian minister. The knowledge of what the Gospel had done in evangelising individuals of that degraded race should stimulate the supporters of this society to sustained and even more vigorous efforts. (Cheers.)

Mr. F. ALLPORT seconded the resolution in a brief speech, and the meeting closed with the benediction.

## EVANGELICAL CONTINENTAL SOCIETY.

The annual meeting of this society was held on Wednesday, May 10, at Finsbury Chapel. There was not a large attendance. H. Richard, Esq., M.P., presided. Among those present were the Rev. W. M. Statham, the Rev. E. T. Prust, Pasteur Dardier, the Rev. S. Hebditch, the Rev. J. Shedlock, the Rev. A. F. Simpson, &c.

The SECRETARY, the Rev. John Shedlock, read an abstract of the report. The disastrous war between France and Germany threatened to cut off the resources of all the evangelical societies on the continent at a time when it was most desirable that the people in their sorrow and suffering should not be left without the consolations of the Gospel. A special appeal in aid of the various societies, and in regard to the claims of the French wounded and prisoners, resulted in contributions to the amount of 1,763*l*., which had enabled the committee to render much needed aid to evangelistic efforts on the continent. An interesting letter had been received from M. Fisch, at Paris, acknowledging the value of the aid thus afforded. The total income of the year was 4,230*l*., making with the balance in hand last year, 4,342*l*. 12*s*. 4*d*. The increase in the society's field of labour, which includes France, Spain, Italy, Bohemia, and Belgium, renders this sum inadequate to meet the exigencies of the case. The report thus proceeds:—

For several years your committee have had to report that wars and the political changes consequent upon them have enlarged their field of labour. During the last year one of the results of the war has been so striking that it deserves special notice. With the fall of the French Empire came the fall of the temporal power of the Pope. The entry of the Italian troops into Rome, and the proclamation of Rome as the capital of the kingdom of Italy, involved the freedom to preach the Gospel. After some little delay this right was secured, and your committee at once sent two evangelists to the new field. They have now returned to their respective posts, Ben and Milan; and the work, in so far as your committee is concerned, will be continued by a well-qualified evangelist. The opening of Rome has excited the attention and sympathy of several sections of the Church. The Vaudois Church has sent a minister, the Wesleyans have opened a hall, an English Baptist has a service in Italian; the Free Churches of Italy, with which your committee co-operate, have two places of worship. In addition to the places in which the Gospel is regularly preached in Italian, Signor Gavazzi has delivered a course of lectures upon the Church of Rome to large congregations in the



Free Church of Scotland. In the spring of last year a meeting of delegates from the Free Italian Churches was held in Milan, and a Union was formed. A declaration of principles was drawn up and published. One special object of the Union is to aid the work of evangelisation. Your committee have decided to render aid to the Union. As a first step they have decided to undertake to support an excellent Evangelist at Rome in connection with the Union.

At Florence Professor Geymant, of the Vaudois College, has obtained an old Catholic chapel, in which a congregation has been gathered. The committee have undertaken the support at that place of a young minister who has completed his studies in the Vaudois College.

One branch of the work in Italy is worthy of special consideration. All the friends of Italian evangelisation are agreed upon the question of Christian schools, and desire their establishment in all the principal towns in Italy. The results obtained in the schools in Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, Naples, and other places are encouraging, and the deep conviction of all who are qualified to speak with authority is that no surer method of securing permanent results could be adopted. It seems to be the only plan of securing good teachers for schools, and evangelists; and, judging from the experience obtained in other fields of missionary labour, to be the simplest plan for making known a Scriptural Christianity. Your committee would earnestly commend the plan of establishing schools of a superior character to all the friends of missions.

In Spain the work of evangelisation has been greatly blessed. At Madrid the congregation worshipping in the Madera Baja has been organised into a church under the pastorate of Senor Carasco; the number of members is 350, and of worshippers about 1000. A second place of worship has been opened in connection with this church. In Saragossa, Pastor Senor Egimeus preaches in a hall capable of accommodating 900 persons, to a crowded and attentive audience; there are always many persons who are unable to find places. A union of churches has been formed, including those of Madrid, Saragossa, Carminas, Seville, Cordova, Malaga, Cadiz, and Granada. The committee are supporting a Bible-woman and a teacher in Madrid and an evangelist in Valencia. The construction of a commodious place of worship for the church at Madrid, for which Senor Carasco has gathered funds in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and England, will be commenced shortly. From Bohemia cheering news had been received of the progress of evangelistic efforts. At a time when the whole continent is struggling for deliverance from the thralldom of the political system called Popery, the committee appeal to the friends of the Gospel for sympathy and extended support in helping forward the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

The CHAIRMAN said the progress of events had been of late singularly favourable to the operations of this society. Twelve or fifteen years ago freedom of religious teaching was a thing almost unknown on the Continent of Europe, and facts of a very painful character illustrated the dangers to which those were exposed who tried to exert that right in Spain, in Italy, in Austria, and other countries. He remembered that when he was at Rome about two years ago an excellent Protestant minister was brought under legal penalties for an attempt to preach the Gospel in that city, but now all obstacles of that kind have been removed out of the way by the mysterious operations of God's Providence. The hold which ancient superstitions had on the popular mind in those countries has been to a great extent lessened, but we must not, therefore, rush hastily to the conclusion that because they have relinquished a false religion they are quite prepared to embrace a purer faith. About two years ago he took a tour through many of the principal countries of Europe, visiting France, Belgium, Holland, Prussia, Austria, Bavaria, and Italy, and took every opportunity to inquire into the religious condition of the various countries which he visited. He found then that Popery was rapidly losing its hold on the popular mind, but that the sanguine expectations which were entertained in England that on that account Protestantism was favourably looked upon were greatly exaggerated. The danger was that the people in those countries would become practically faithless, that they would fall from Popery into infidelity, a kind of infidelity which it was difficult to deal with, a kind of godliness and indifference to all kinds of spiritual truth, for there exists in some of those countries an amount of ignorance hardly credible. According to the last census which was taken of the Kingdom of Italy in 1864, out of a total population of 21,703,710 souls there were 3,884,245 who could read and write; 893,588 who could only read; and 16,999,701 who could neither read nor write. In Spain, out of a total population of 15,807,753, there were 2,414,015 men and 715,906 women able to read and write; 316,557 men, and 380,211 women able to read but not to write; leaving 5,000,000 men and 6,800,000 women unable to read. This was the kind of material upon which they had to operate. There was, however, in one sense, an advantage connected with this, that if they could get hold of the children when young, and bring them into schools where a purer doctrine is taught, thus having the opportunity of preoccupying their minds, they might look forward to their becoming the foundation of a better society. He had great sympathy for the French people, partly because they belonged to the same Celtic race, the Welsh and the French being a kind of cousin-germans; they were a noble race, and had many admirable qualities. Low and pro-

trate as France was at the present time, he believed she would rise improved and purified in character. He did not concur in the view of those who represented France as suffering under Divine judgment; he saw in the events which had occurred rather the operation of natural causes. When in France after the revolution of 1849 he noticed that the windows of the publishers were filled with pamphlets discussing every kind of social and political question with wonderful animation and talent. He remarked this fact to a gentleman connected with the press, and spoke of it as an indication of extraordinary mental activity. "Yes," was the reply; "there is plenty of mental activity, but unhappily they are apostles without a faith." And so it was. There was wonderful speculative power about the French. What they want is a faith. With this the gifts possessed by the French would be found productive of the most blessed results hereafter. At the present time everything is moving around us. Marvellous are the changes witnessed, and, in the main, those changes were favourable to the operations of such a society as this. In the movement which is thus going on around, in the overturning of much which has lasted so long, may we not hear the voice of Him who exclaims, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He shall come whose right it is to reign"? (Loud cheers.)

The meeting was then addressed by the Rev. W. M. STATHAM and the Rev. E. T. PRUST. The last-named speaker said he rejoiced that the income of the society was approaching the 5,000*l.* a year for which in past times they had aimed, and for this they were largely indebted to the indefatigable labours of their secretary; with the increase in the spheres of labour they must now strive to bring up that income to 10,000*l.* a year. Among the various societies which were now holding their meetings in London, he was convinced that the work of this society was not the least interesting or important, and the manner in which the society was performing its work entitled it to the continued and unabated attachment of the churches. (Cheers.)

Pasteur DARDIER said in addressing the meeting he felt sure that God had yet something good to send to France—that He has put her low, very low, that the Gospel and the Gospel only may elevate her people. (Cheers.) The society in Geneva during the war employed about fifteen evangelists, and the Evangelical Continental Society employed two evangelists and three colporteurs among the soldiers, including the 89,000 French soldiers who were driven into Switzerland. In France the Catholic people are divided into two parts. Many millions who are baptized in the Romish Church do not believe in it, have entirely put aside their belief. Besides these there are millions exceedingly attached to their faith; and it is easier to preach the Gospel among those who are attached to Popery than among the others who are without faith, and dislike religion because they know it only in connection with falsehood and absurdity. The Geneva Society, thinking that the fact of a Protestant nation being at war with France would create a prejudice against evangelisation, put a cross on the first page of their tracts, but that, instead of being an attraction for the Catholic soldiers, was, on the contrary, the means of producing in them a repulse. In Dijon, Lisle, and the south of France, the colporteurs were told to keep their tracts which were believed to be from the Romanists; when the soldiers heard that they were Protestant tracts they were willing to receive them. It was considered desirable, wherever practicable, to sell the book rather than give it away, as the soldiers appreciated it more, and the price was only two sous; hundred of the soldiers had purchased copies to send to their families. The Geneva Society applied for permission to send three Swiss ministers to visit the French soldiers imprisoned in Germany. The first chaplain in the Prussian army said:—"We shall give you permission for three on two conditions—first, that they will receive a salary from the Government, and that you never will send a minister who does not hold Evangelical views." The soldiers received the evangelists gladly. Finding they were depressed in their minds, one of the ministers invited them daily to a room where he instructed them in singing, and on Sunday preached to them the Gospel. So grateful were they to him that at the close of his visit they solicited him to allow himself to be photographed amid a group of them, as, they said, when they were absent from him in their homes, "we should like to have our papa with us." Every soldier who passed through Switzerland received a portion of the Gospel or a tract. A colporteur met some of these on their road home, and they spoke in high terms of the kindness with which they have been treated, and showed their New Testament and tracts carefully stored away, together with a view of Geneva, showing that their hearts had been touched by the kindness manifested by the Swiss among whom they arrived in a state of very great destitution and distress. About 600,000 copies of portions of the Gospel, almanacs and tracts, have been diffused during the last year by the Geneva Society, about half a million having been distributed among the soldiers. Such a distribution as this had never before been made, and they must feel thankful that God had enabled them to effect so much, and indulge the hope that good fruit would in time result from the seed thus sown. (Applause.) Pasteur Dardier concluded by moving the following resolution:—

That this meeting rejoices in the increased facilities for the preaching of the Gospel on the continent, and urges upon the friends of missions the importance of prompt action in order to save the people who are now shaking off the influence of the Church of Rome from falling into infidelity.

The Rev. S. HEEDITCH seconded the resolution. The Rev. J. SHEDLOCK, in moving a vote of thanks to the chairman, said he felt encouraged that their place of meeting was larger, and the audience was the largest which he had known for several years, and that the income of the society was increasing. He had just been visiting Germany, Rome, and Spain. He knew what it was to have claims on behalf of millions of people before him, and be compelled with the committee to say, "Would to God we had the means—that our churches at home would afford us the opportunity of answering these appeals. Could adequate funds be raised, the influence of England would, he believed, soon tell on Europe, and the influence of Europe soon tell on the rest of the world. He had visited several places of worship in various parts of the country, and he found how ready the churches were to take up the subject with interest when the facts were brought before them. They were quite as willing, when they knew the circumstances of the case, to help their neighbours on the Continent as they were to help those at home, or those who were at a greater distance.

The Rev. A. F. SIMPSON seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously, and briefly responded to.

THE BOOK SOCIETY.—The one hundred and twenty-first annual meeting of the Book Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor was held on the 4th inst. in the Guildhall Coffee-house, Gresham-street, City. The chair was taken by the President, the Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury, who was a few minutes late, owing to an accident to his carriage in Leicester-square, as he was being driven to the meeting. Prayer having been offered by the Rev. Dr. Whittemore, the report was read by Mr. Mummery, which explained that the object of the founders and also of the present supporters of the institution had been the diffusion of Christian literature among the poor, and the supplying of sound and popular publications to other classes of society. With this end in view, such books as "Times of Refreshing," "He's Coming To-morrow," Mr. B. H. Cowper's "Popular Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity," have been issued in a cheap form, and circulated by thousands. A "Life of Christ," containing 192 pages, with five wood engravings, written in a style suited for the young, and dedicated to the Earl of Shaftesbury, had been published during the past year. Its price is twopenny. Of the twopenny edition of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," nearly half a million had been issued from the society's depot, one gentleman of Edinburgh taking and paying for 20,000 copies for distribution among the children of that city. Another publication, showing the evils of intemperance, had also been largely purchased, and the committee were glad to be enabled to announce that they had in the press a new three-and-sixpenny edition of the admirable work, "Stones Crying Out," which would shortly be published. The society is now issuing Bibles and Testaments with its own imprint, for which they expect an extensive sale. The report further dwelt on the healthy and beneficial operations of the society, not only in England, but also in the colonies. The income of the society during the past year reached 7,918*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* The Rev. S. Charlesworth moved the adoption of the report, and briefly commented on the highly satisfactory character and practical usefulness of the society, especially in supplying Sunday-school reward books at a reduced rate. The motion was seconded by Professor M'All, who remarked on the sceptical tendency of modern works of philosophy and science, against which no warnings, in his opinion, could be too loud, earnest, and frequent. The motion, on being put to the meeting was carried unanimously. The Rev. Dr. Doudney moved the second resolution, which was seconded by the Rev. J. H. Wilson. The next resolution was ably moved and seconded by the Revs. G. Martin and T. Alexander. In reply to a unanimous vote of thanks moved by the Rev. J. de Kewer Williams, and seconded by the Rev. W. Campbell, the noble Chairman, referring to statements which had been made, to the effect that there was now no necessity for the existence of the society, said that, in his opinion, there was now more necessity for its operations than ever, as every day made this and kindred institutions more indispensable to the welfare and progress of the country. As a great deal had been said in the course of the evening about the progress of Popery in our country, his lordship said that he had not much fear of that, but what he mostly feared was, the new Broad Church principles which were slowly and stealthily making their way, and which must eventually end in naked, unvarnished infidelity. One object of the society was to prevent the extension of such principles as these by disseminating books which would effectually counteract them. The awful trials which had befallen France, and which she was still undergoing, should be a warning to us. The Book Society, for which he had always felt an affection, would, he hoped, do much to prevent such a terrible consummation by spreading broadcast over the land the Word of God, and those books in accordance with its noble principles which the committee so freely issued from its depot. The doxology was then sung, and the Rev. H. Baker pronounced the benediction.

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